

VZCZCXRO5804
PP RUEHQU
DE RUEHPU #1695/01 2951112
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 221112Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7082
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 1676
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1490
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY 0921
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1335

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 001695

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR AND INL
S/CRS
SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [HA](#) [KCRM](#) [KCRS](#) [KJUS](#) [SOCI](#)
SUBJECT: SEVERE CONDITIONS IN MEN'S NATIONAL PENITENTIARY

REF: PORT-AU-PRINCE 1532

PORT AU PR 00001695 001.2 OF 002

¶1. Summary. Prisoners in the men's national penitentiary in Port-au-Prince suffer from severe overcrowding and live in extremely unhygienic conditions. The prison lacks the most basic facilities and equipment for hygienic food preparation and elementary health care. Numbers of correctional officers and their equipment are insufficient to adequately guard or manage the prison. End summary.

Prison For 1200 Inmates Holds 3070

¶2. Embassy Human Rights officer and Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) Chief visited the men's national penitentiary in Port-au-Prince October 4. The National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince, built in 1915, was originally designed to hold a maximum of 800 prisoners. The penitentiary was expanded in 1997 to accommodate an additional 400 inmates, for a total of 1200 prisoners. On October 4, the prison held 3070 inmates, slightly more than 2.5 times its intended occupancy. Of the 3070 prisoners, 110 were convicted while 2960 were in pre-trial detention, awaiting final disposition of their cases. A typical 170 square foot cell contains 72 prisoners. A typical 50 square foot cell contains 40 persons. In order to sleep, inmates either take turns sleeping, sleep in makeshift hammocks hung from the window bars, sleep standing up, or sleep during physical recreation period when many prisoners leave their cells. It is a common practice to pay the physically stronger inmates money in exchange for a number of hours of uninterrupted sleep in a bed.

¶3. The cells do not have latrines or running water. Inmates who cannot wait until recreation period in order to relieve themselves defecate in plastic bags, which are kept inside the cells, or urinate through the cell bars into the corridor or into plastic bottles. Consequently, the poorly ventilated prison cells and corridors reek of urine and feces. The prisoners have access to about three quarts of clean water per day to satisfy all of their needs, including washing and drinking. Many prisoners suffer from sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis, and various skin ailments. Robinson Cadet, an American CIVPOL corrections advisor to MINUSTAH,

has secured \$25,000 in private funding for a cleaning and sanitation project called Titanic Plus that will target the penitentiary cell block known as 'the Titanic.'

Facilities Unhygienic And Inadequate

¶4. Food is stored and prepared in unhygienic conditions. Since the two existing chest-type freezers are inadequate to store all the food requiring refrigeration, most food remains unrefrigerated. The kitchen contains no counters for preparing food. Food is cooked in open vats, which are placed uncovered on the ground during and after the preparation process. Prisoners transport the vats of food from the kitchen to the cell blocks. To receive their two meals per day, inmates must line up in the unhygienic corridors of the cell blocks to receive food from the vats which are placed on the corridor floor. Some prisoners also receive food brought by relatives - approximately 200 relatives visit the prison on weekdays and 500 on weekends.

¶5. The two-room infirmary is overcrowded as well. Patients sleep on beds or mattresses on the floor under the beds. There is no quarantine unit for patients with tuberculosis or leprosy. Each room contains about 27 patients. The infirmary, however, does have latrines and water. The small nurses' station between the two rooms does not have refrigeration for medicines or a secured cabinet for controlled medicines.

Correctional Officers And Riot Equipment Needed

¶6. Officially, 118 correctional officers work at the penitentiary, but in reality, only 40 officers, spread across two shifts, guard and manage the prison. The remaining 78

PORT AU PR 00001695 002.2 OF 002

officers remain on the payroll but do not report to work. The correctional officers have no radios or riot equipment, nor do they venture into the cell blocks. (Note: The American CIVPOL advisor is the only uniformed officer that regularly enters the cell blocks. End note.) The prison only has one vehicle, which the inspector uses to transport prisoners to the hospital or to court, and to buy the food needed to feed the prisoners. MINUSTAH soldiers and riot police are stationed outside the prison, but the security of the correctional officers inside the prison is tenuous at best.

Comment

¶7. The Embassy's Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) visited the National Penitentiary in order to assess possible quick impact projects, particularly projects that would improve the health and sanitation conditions in the prison. In the course of the visit, NAS identified several areas in which small projects would have a major impact toward ameliorating prison conditions: at least three additional water tanks to allow the prison to store water sufficient for one day; kitchen equipment, including refrigeration, to improve sanitation in food preparation; a pump to allow access to water for washing from the underground 75,000 gallon cistern; additional supplies and equipment to support the expansion of the Titanic Plus program throughout the entire prison; medical equipment and supplies for the infirmary; and possible construction of a small isolation ward for highly contagious prisoners to keep them separated from the main inmate population.

¶8. Comment continued. Human rights organizations, the National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH), the International Crisis Group (ICG) and the Interamerican Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), for example, have published several reports documenting the degrading prison

conditions. The GoH's Office for the Protection of Citizens (OPC) also has commented on the severity of the prison's living conditions. Post has also reported on the conditions at the prison in its human rights report. Without question, the conditions at the National Penitentiary are among the worst in the country, much more severe than the conditions in Hinche (see reftel) or the Women's Prison in Petionville, a suburb of Port-au-Prince. RNDDH, the ICG, the ICHR and the OPC have all expressed concern that the elevated incarceration rates due to the security crackdown and ineffectual judicial system will only aggravate the already deficient human rights conditions of the Haitian penal system. NAS's quick impact projects should contribute substantially toward alleviating some of the dire living conditions in the National Penitentiary.

SANDERSON